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Non traditional quilting: A Combination of material and process

Jennifer Ziehl

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Rochester Institute of Technology

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the College
of Imaging Arts and Sciences in candidacy for
the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

Non Traditional Quilting: A combination of material and process

by
Jennifer M. Ziehl

May 31, 2000

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Acknowledgments

Much love and thanks to my parents Richard and Joan, Always telling me I
could, Never telling me I couldn't.
And for understanding the continual quest for higher education.

My big, little brother Jonathan.

My thesis committee, Max, Linda and Karen

The Weaving and Textile Department at RIT.
Finally a place where my artistic abilities were nurtured and encouraged,
and the place of my favorite memories.
Rest In Peace.

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Thesis Proposal

“ For my graduate thesis I will create a series of quilts
that will be hung on the wall or in space.

Through research, I will develop various images
and select the appropriate textile technique to produce each piece.

The art elements and principles of design will be utilized
in the development of each quilt”

Introduction

My exploration of textiles started at age three when I remember learning how to embroider with my Mother. The end result was a bunny in overalls stitched on a piece of green cotton. That bunny hung in my grandmother's house for years.

I grew up in a household where my Mother sewed everything. Curtains, bedspreads, and most influential to me, clothes. Later she started quilting. While at the time I didn't realize the influence the quilts had on my own sewing, it is now very evident to me. I was also influenced by my maternal great grandmother whose quilts I slept under as a child and as a young adult. Quilting is a large part of my family's history and has become a medium where I can combine my love of the textile processes and my love of textile history.

I was trained in sewing by my Mother through the Niagara County 4-H program. I was as 4-H member for twelve years. During that time I was able to hone my sewing skills until I was very adept at creating fashions using a commercially produced pattern. I won many awards, locally, statewide and nationally. As a result I thought fashion design was what I wanted to do as my career choice. This choice led me to pursue a college education in Fashion Merchandising and Design from the State University of New York at Oneonta. I loved learning how to create illustrations in my Fashion Illustration class, I learned how to create a pattern from a sloper in my flat pattern design course and how to hand tailor a suit the way they do in top fashion houses. The merchandising end of the course work didn't excite me as much. I was not too concerned with this, not knowing where my career was going to lead me. I was surprised that when I graduated the only jobs I could find were in Fashion Merchandising. There was no creative design involved anywhere! I was a warm body to open and close the store, count the money and deter shoplifters. There was very little room

for me to advance out of my position. I had a four year college degree and began to ask myself “ What am I doing here?”, . I began to think about graduate school and discovered the School for American Crafts. They had a weaving program and even though the only weaving I had done was making potholders for my Mom, I knew that the Rochester Institute of Technology - School for American Crafts was where I wanted to be.

It's been an interesting experience since I have been at the School for American Crafts. I have never been in an environment where my desire to learn as much about my field as possible was rewarded. I was given ample space to work and more importantly access to people who could answer my questions and didn't think my ideas were nuts. It hasn't always been an easy journey, especially since I didn't come from a traditional art background but the effort has been rewarded.

Creating the Concept

“What this old one says is that a good weaver must find
the harmony place...

Weaving is sitting in the harmony place. That is what my mother says.
In the harmony place there is no room for the enemy”¹

When I returned to school this past Fall there was no “harmony place” to be found! I had been hearing ugly rumors for two months that the Textile Department had been discontinued. After weekly phone calls and countless attempts to secure any information I was told ...”Yes, the program has been discontinued but you are being allowed to finish your degree and nothing will change.” This was not how I saw it. I only had four classmates now, those that were not going to graduate within one year were told to find new majors. The textile room was now one half the size of last year. The attitude towards the department was different. Departmental planning sheets that were readily available had to be dug out of the back of filing cabinets. The textile advertisement was taken off the Webpage. Many days I felt like an animal in a zoo because of the increased traffic through our studio. I can’t count the number of times that we moved the desks, looms and tables trying to accommodate yet another piece of something that had to be accommodated in our space. As a result I was angry! I felt that the School had done a really good job of taking advantage of all the hard work we had done and all of the amazing things we had produced the year before. I felt lied to and in some respects, violated.

This is what used to be my “Harmony Place”

In the midst of all this turmoil I needed to create, or develop the concept for my body of thesis work. The idea of creating a concept was

¹ Navajo Weaver in David Jongward’s “Weaver of Worlds” Rochester Vermont 1990

something that came very hard for me. Honestly, I struggled with it. I have always had a difficult time figuring out where my work fit into the larger scheme. Was I an Artist, or was I a Craftsperson? I created pieces that were more functional than not, I like to have an end use for my creations. When I wove a length of fabric or created a rug I knew of the intended end use. The idea of creating a piece that had no functional end use was a struggle. How could I create with fiber in a way that would be viewed in a gallery, but not feel foreign to me? My other obstacle was to put this concept into words and not be so vague that it was obscure.

Part of my difficulty in writing a concept for my thesis was that I had never been convinced that my work has some hidden deeper meaning. I do not try to be representational in my work and I sometimes have difficulty grasping that idea. My ideas are very research based, since I enjoy the process as much as the end product. While a loom takes countless hours to prepare, it is worth it when I am finally able to weave, even though I finish weaving in a short time.

I wanted to make sure that my work was truly mine and very sincere. I was also trying not to be influenced too greatly by the chaos in the studio around me. I was not ready to have those emotions be the basis of my thesis. I thought it was a little melodramatic and not at all like me. One idea I did begin to develop was exploring my own personal textile history and the role that textiles had, especially quilts, in telling a woman's story. Textiles was often her only medium to work in. Quilts were easy to transport, did not take a large amount of continuous fabric, so scraps could be used and allowed the sewer to become very creative while making a functional item. The idea of a quilt was perfect. I could produce different elements of the quilt using different techniques. The finished quilt would be a piece of art but still allude to the functionality that was important to me. These pieces would

also be another step in the family history of quilting that was equally important. That would give my thesis meaning.

Plus, I was finally excited about the whole idea .

My thesis statement ultimately developed into a series of four quilts. They vary in size but are not large enough to be truly functional. Each of the quilts was an exploration of a textile technique combined with the use of original color developed with the dye process. Each quilt has a dominate feature that is an example of the chosen textile technique. The back of each quilt was finished so it could be hung in space or against a viewing surface. The pieces are easy to install and transport, two aspects that were very important to me. Created as a series, the quilts can be viewed this way or individually. All four of the quilts also have their own personalities.

Preliminary Research

Color swatches and samples:

An important aspect of the quilt series was that the colors should compliment each other in a way so that the pieces could be viewed together or separately. This was an important challenge to me because I wanted to create my own colors, literally creating a color palette that my work would draw from. To do this I chose to use Cushing's hot water dyes. Some of the colors were favorites of mine from previous projects and others were ones I had never used before. I wanted a broad range of color but I also knew I wanted a color that was more complex. This meant that I would be doing a lot of over dying to ensure a rich color quality. As a result of the over dying the quilts have common unifying colors between them. I think this element adds to the visual cohesiveness of the series. These are the colors I worked from: Magenta, Tan, Seal Brown, Plum, Blue, Violet, Silver Gray, Dark Gray, Black, Bronze, Silver gray Green, Scarlet, Peacock and Turquoise. These colors were then broken into seven groups. The selection of these groups started out being random, but after further development I placed them in groups that were more appropriate for the end results I was trying to achieve.

Group One: Magenta, Tan, Seal Brown and Plum.

Group Two: Peacock, Turquoise, Blue and Violet.

Group Three: Plum, Silver Gray, Dark Gray and Black.

Group Four: Magenta, Silver Gray, Dark Gray and Black.

Group Five: Bronze, Silver Gray Green, Silver Gray
and Dark Gray.

Group Six: Blue, Violet, Plum and Magenta.

Group Seven: Scarlet, Magenta, Tan and Seal Brown.

The colors were then tested on fibers that I was using in the thesis. These were Silk Noile, 8mm silk Habatoi, 20/20 cotton, and 3/2 cotton. For each dye sample I placed a swatch of silk noile, silk habatoi, 20/2 cotton and 3/2 cotton into the first dye bath of the group. That dye bath contained two inches of water, two tablespoons Glubber's salt and one quarter teaspoon of the selected Cushing dye. These samples were allowed to soak for three minutes. They were removed, rinsed in cold water and added to the second dye bath. This continued until the samples were dyed in each of the four colors from the group. Each time the sample was dyed it was not fully immersed in the dye solution so that the gradation of color could be seen. This allowed me to see what the overdyeing would look like.

Although this process was very time consuming, it allowed me to make choices later on in the process to ensure the visual continuity of my work. The results were very interesting, some combinations that I thought would look wonderful, did not. Others were a pleasant surprise. This proved to be a valuable learning experience and created future color reference material.

Woven Twill Sample

Since the creation of my thesis proposal I knew that I wanted to weave the majority of my own fabrics. I wasn't sure if I wanted to concentrate on the weave structure of the piece or the color combinations. In order to investigate this further, I felt that it was necessary to weave a sample using different fibers and threading patterns. I wanted a weave structure that would be very durable but still offer a large number of choices to me. This resulted in the woven twill sample.

One of the main ideas of weaving this sample was to experiment with eight different patterns and eight different warp threads. I wanted to see what the difference between each fiber would be so that I could

make an educated decision for my final pieces. I knew that it would be important for me to experiment with both natural and synthetic fibers in the warp as well as the weft because I was not sure on which I wanted to focus. My first inclination was to focus on natural fibers but I wanted to make sure I wasn't limiting my resources. The samples I used ranged from 100% silk, rayon, and cotton to a mixture of cotton and rayon, silk and wool.

The eight designs I chose to weave in this sampler were: Crepe Twill, Modified Hop Vine, Jennifer's Star, German Design, Triple Draught Bird's Eye, Pennsylvania Dutch Twill, Ester Preheentupa's Block and Anna Hericksson's Fancy. These are all very traditional weave structures that would represent my interest in the history of weaving and textiles. Each design was represented by one of the eight warp fibers used. This was done so the samples could be woven at the same time but still be distinguished from one another. The weft fiber used in this sample also corresponds with the warp. For example: the first warp chain was wound from "Duchess II" a raw silk boucle yarn, that was threaded in the Crepe Twill design. While treading this design I also used Duchess II as the weft. This idea was practiced throughout the entire sample.

This sample turned out to be a very valuable learning tool. I discovered that focusing on the weave structure wasn't the direction that I wanted to take. I enjoyed the experimenting with the different fibers and will use that information in future projects. I also decided that the fibers I had experimented with were too large. I wanted a fiber that would appear to be a little more delicate, thereby giving the piece greater interest due to a higher thread count per inch.

The Stained Glass Quilt

Another aspect of my preliminary research was the quilt I made in the fall quarter quilting elective. This was the second time I had taken this elective and I was determined to make a large quilt, possibly one that was full or queen sized. I enjoyed this elective very much. The idea of quilting for my thesis was becoming more and more tangible. By making the stained glass quilt I was able to learn new techniques in quilting and learned to work on a larger scale. My quilting experience to this point had been limited to smaller lap sized pieces. I enjoyed working with this larger scale and soon found out that it was very time consuming, which helped me to determine the scale for my thesis works. The stained glass quilt is based on an abstract strip quilted pattern. There are thirty-five squares of the same size, strip quilted with the same color fabric. These squares were then assembled and the black “tracery” was appliquéd on top. The same black fabric was used for the sashing and the back of the quilt.

There are some similarities between the thesis quilts and the stained glass quilt. They all have a sashing of either two or four inches that is the same fabric used for the back of the quilt. After seeing this effect in the stained glass quilt I realized that it added a frame like quality to the edge of the piece, one that I liked and wanted to replicate. All of the quilts are based on a grid system. This aspect is not so apparent in the thesis quilts as the stained glass quilt but is an important feature, one that I will be discussing later in depth. The other feature that the quilts share is a bound edge. This was done for the first time on the stained glass quilt. After finishing the quilt in that manner I decided that I like the clean look and again wanted to repeat it. This finishing technique reinforced the frame like quality of the edge of the

quilt. I found it also lent itself well to the finishing of the thesis quilts because of an invisible casing that is located on the back of each.

I've wondered from the beginning that if I hadn't taken this quilting elective would I have quilted for my thesis? I'm not sure but this experience was an eye opening one.

Material and Processes

Quilt One: Plangi

After deciding that quilting was the area that I wanted to focus on for my thesis I had to determine what the quilts were going to look like and what size they were going to be. One of the difficulties that I have when planning a project is that I tend to try to accomplish more than I possibly can in the time frame presented to me. I start out with huge ideas, often in very large scale, not realizing that I could not possibly finish in time. This was one of the concerns I had when planning my series of quilts. Originally I thought I wanted them to be huge. queen size, full size... it didn't matter, the bigger the better, I thought ! I started to think how long it would take to weave a piece of fabric that would translate well into a queen size quilt, not to mention having to weave four of them. I realized this was not a feasible solution. My next option was to scale down the size of the quilts in a way that they still alluded to being functional. I think this was best represented in the plangi and green quilt. If you really wanted to use them as a coverlet, they are large enough to do so.

Once the basic size of my pieces was determined I could then determine how much woven fabric I need to create for the plangi quilt. I wanted to combine the woven feature of the quilt with dyed fabric but I

though the woven fabric should be the most important feature in the piece.

Plangi was a dying system that I had done in the past and was very pleased with the results. It is a very time consuming process both tying and untying the knots in the warp chains. Overall this warp contained aprox. 2,875 knots. I had done a sample that contained both plangi and ikat, but for this piece I determined that the plangi process was a better choice. There was a total of fifty-eight warp chains that contained thirty warp threads each. When dressed on the loom these chains would each represent one-half inch of the woven fabric.

After winding the warp threads I placed them into the first dye bath that contained two tablespoons Glubber's salt and one teaspoon of dye. The warp was separated into two groups of twenty-nine chains and placed into two pots containing the same mixture. They were then dyed magenta. After the chains had been rinsed, dried and untangled, I measured eighteen inches from the start of the chain at the porey cross end. This is where I tied the first knot. Following that knot, there was a succession of thirty four more knots tied, making sure they were tight and as close together as possible. Each chain was tied in this way. The chains were placed in a tan dye bath, rinsed and dried. After this dye bath I place two chains together and started to tie knots where the previous ones had stopped. That was a total of twenty-five knots per every two chains. The knots were then dyed in a seal brown dye bath, rinsed and dried.

The next step was combining three warp chains and tying a series of fifteen knots. This was the last set of knots to be tied. Once that was finished the chains were submersed in the final dye bath, which was plum in color. The chains were then rinsed, and placed to dry. After the chains were dried the knots were untied. This definitely was the most time consuming aspect of the process. One of the tricks I learned was to make sure the chains were completely dried before

attempting to untie them. This made things easier both on your hands and on the warp threads.

To weave the plangi fabric I used a four harness, thirty two inch wide floor loom. The fabric was woven in two pieces, one was twenty four inches wide and the other was eighteen inches. According to the design of my quilt, the plangi was going to be cut apart. In order to make this process easier and the measurement of four inch wide strips more obvious, I wound a two inch wide warp chain that had been dyed to the darkest shade of the four colors. This chain was placed between each four inch section of warp, making a seam allowance and sewing guide that was easy to see. With this measurement in place there was no doubt where to cut the pieces apart or to sew them. The weft for this piece was 20/2 cotton that I purchased commercially dyed. The piece was woven in plain weave to maximize the effect of color in the warp. When weaving was finished the fabric was washed with synthrapol in lukewarm water to full the fabric. It was then hung to dry and pressed. At this time I was ready to start the actual sewing of the quilt.

People asked me every time I cut into a piece of hand woven fabric, "Aren't you scared to do that in case you make a mistake?". I usually think about their question for a minute and then tell them "no... because I'm sure that I'm doing it right." This time I want to be absolutely sure before I cut anything. As a result, before I cut the woven fabric or the fabric I had dyed, I made a very detailed list of the pieces that were needed, the size and what fabric they were being cut from. I figured out the exact measurement and lay-out of each piece, making a cutting diagram as I went. Then I checked and doubled checked my measurements and proceeded to cut out the pieces for the plangi quilt. All of the pieces were labeled and kept in order to minimize confusion.

I was very pleased with the fabric I had woven due to the way it behaved while I was cutting my pieces apart. The fabric was very

dense but had a very nice hand. It didn't unravel when cut and it handled very well. Overall I was very pleased with the results. I feel that this was due to the very high ends per inch of the fabric.

Before assembling the quilt pieces I looked at the overall design and tried to make this as straightforward as possible. I wanted to block out large sections at a time to concentrate on, then place them all together. (See illustration one, page seventeen.) After cutting the pieces needed for the quilt I started by making piping from bias cut strips of the eight mm Habatoi silk that was dyed to match the piece. This was used when assembling the pieces, found in section A. I started with piece 1A and sewed it together with piece 2A securing piping in the seam allowance. This continued until all seven pieces had been connected in section A. The unit was pressed and set aside. The pieces in section B were also assembled in this manner. Starting with piece 1B and continuing across, securing piping between each piece. Next I assembled plangi pieces C1 - C5, These were assembled in the same manner as sections A and B but with woven fabric between them, no piping. The commercially woven pieces are represented by W1-W4. After completing these three large pieces of the quilt face, I wanted to sew them together to get a sense for what the quilt was starting to look like. To do this, I started at the bottom and sewed piece W5 together with unit C, I then added W6. This was sewn to Unit A, trying to match line and seam allowances. The next piece added was W7. At this point I had half of my quilt face finished, but the more challenging construction was coming. When I added unit B I was very careful to make sure that the piping lines in this unit matched with the piping lines in unit A. This required careful pinning and I had to re sew some of the seams. The last section of the quilt contains plangi pieces D1-D4 and E1-E3. Pieces E1-E3 were not sewn into the quilt at this time, they were appliquéd on top. Section D was assembled in the same manner as the others, I attached the commercially woven fabric

to the plangi pieces in a way to allow me to create larger pieces and then stitch them together. Pieces D1-D3 were attached to W9-W11, creating a larger section. D4 was attached to W14 and W15, creating another larger section. The two pieces were attached and then sewn to the remaining quilt face. Pieces W16 and W17 were then added, completing the quilt top.

At this time it was necessary to attach pieces E1-E3. My original design called for these to be a single layer of magenta plangi fabric. After pinning them to the piece I felt that the pink color was too strong and needed to be toned down. To resolve this I added piping and a piece of brown plangi arranged so that only a corner of pink peaked out. I also added a very small piece of piping made from pink plangi fabric to square C1. This was done to complete the compositional aspect of the quilt. My first quilt top was completed and I just needed to add the finishing touches!

One of the important qualities that makes a quilt functional is the quilt batting. This can be made from many different things, including natural and synthetic fibers. I wanted to continue with the theme of only natural fibers in my quilts so the quilt batting that I choose was called "Warm and Natural" it is a 100% cotton batting, thinner than many acrylic batts. I was very pleased with this choice because the feel of the finished quilt was not too heavy and could easily be hung on the wall.

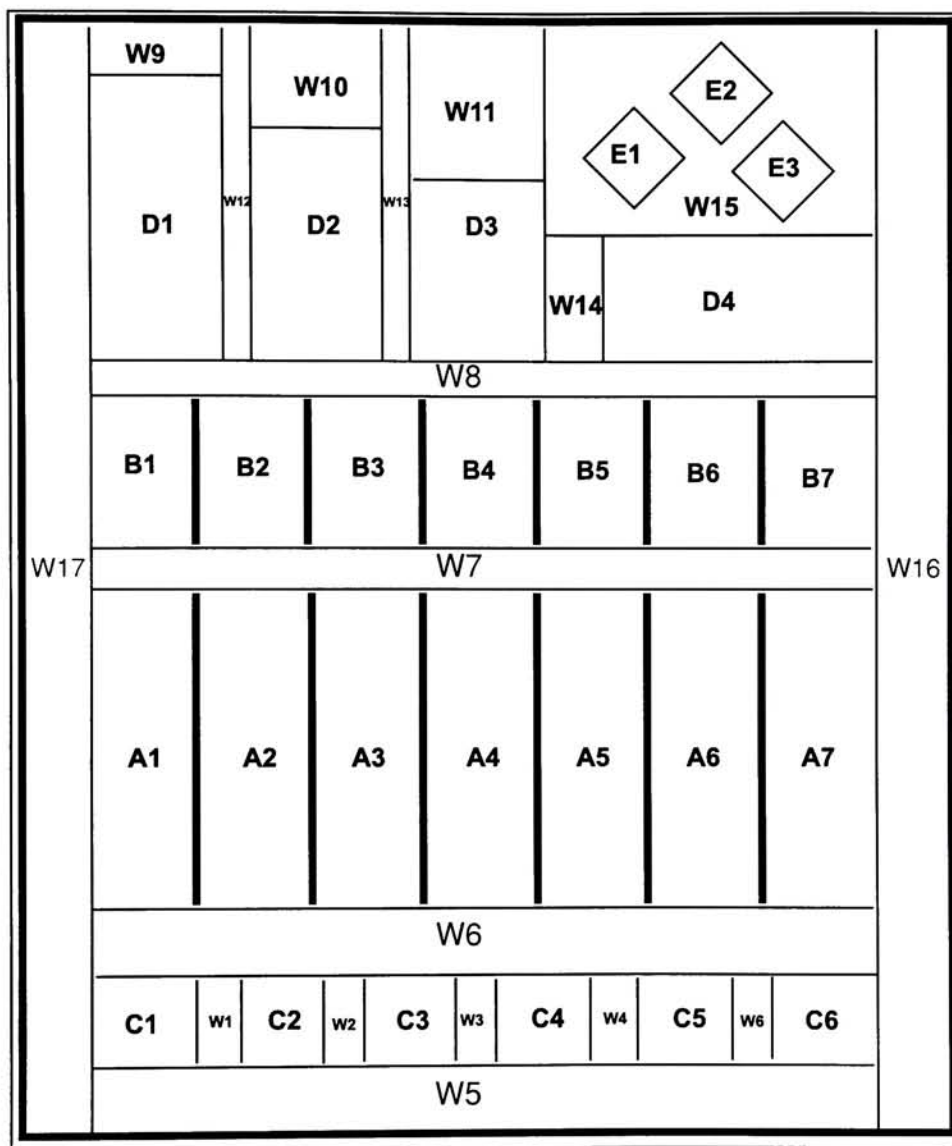
Once the quilt face was finished I laid it on the piece of batting. I had all ready measured the quilt front to make sure it was square. I tacked the batting to front and trimmed away the excess. Then I laid the front and batting onto the backing fabric. I made sure that the fabric was straight and had no wrinkles. The front two layers were tacked to the backing fabric and that fabric was trimmed.

After I established the correct size for the backing fabric I needed to add the concealed casing that is found along the top edge of

each quilt. Once the casing was added I lined the backing fabric up with the other two layers and re-tacked them together. The piping and bias strips were added along the edge and machine stitched with a one-half inch seam allowance. After this was finished I turned the raw edge of the bias strip under and this was hand sewn to the back, creating a clean finished edge. The plangi quilt was finished and I was ready to start the Felt quilt.

Illustration One: Plangi

Layout and Sewing Plan



Quilt Two: Felt

Looking back at the Felt quilt, I think this piece was the most simple to complete from start to finish. The idea sprang from a mistake that happened in the dye process for the plangi quilt. I had all this silk Habatoi and raw silk that turned out really purple instead of the brown that it should have been. My first thought was to make a piece of clothing from the miss-dyed fabric, it was a beautiful color and I love purple. Then I started to think about felt.... I didn't enjoy felting when I had learned it the first time but now I was thinking it would make an interesting quilt top. I could dye wool roving many different colors to compliment the fabric that would be used for the sashing and background. The quality of felt is very painterly and I could compose the piece as if I were painting with oil or acrylic. This piece would be much looser than the woven pieces and I could play with the combination of color.

After deciding that this was a project I wanted to tackle I needed to choose my palette of colors. I wanted to stay within the original colors I had chosen. This was important to ensure the continuity of the series of work. I chose to use plum, bronze, tan, seal brown, turquoise, violet and silver gray. I added blue and navy blue to the palette of colors.

The idea of felt is to card wool and place it in layers between fiberglass screening. The next step is to agitate it with soap and hot water. The hot water causes the fibers to shrink and mat together creating felt. If the wool roving was dyed in hot water it would start to felt prematurely and I would not be able to create the piece I wanted. So dying the wool roving was a new challenge to me. I knew that I

could use hot water dyes but not the hot water. To solve this problem I brought the water in the dye bath to a boil, added my dye and allowed it to simmer for five minutes. I turned off the heat, allowed the dye bath to cool slightly and then added the roving, being careful not to agitate it. The time needed to dye the roving varied from color to color. The darker colors like navy, plum and violet took only thirty to forty minutes to dye while the lighter colors such as tan and silver gray took close to five hours to dye. Wool roving is very deceptive looking when it is dying. When the roving is saturated with the dye bath it appears very dark. When in truth as soon as you squeeze the water from the wool the color is significantly lighter. After the wool was finished dying it was rinsed and air dried. Once the wool was dried you could see that it had started to felt. It was still very soft and easy to pull apart so I was pleased with the results. I had a great array of colors and was ready to start carding the wool.

I started the felt quilt by creating the large piece of felt that is featured in the center. (See illustration two, page 28, for reference.) The first layer of unit A was three batts of plum blended with violet and when arranged side by side on the fiberglass screening they measured twenty-six inches wide by twenty-seven inches long. The next layer of wool was three batts going in the opposite direction. These batts contained plum, violet, navy and light blue roving. After the first two batts were established I began to experiment with the color and arrangement of the wool. I knew that I would need to build up five or six layers of wool in order to have a stable piece of felt. I proceeded to add more of each color, emphasizing more in some areas and decreasing in others. I wanted to have a piece that was pleasant to look at and something that was compositionally sound. In some areas I didn't use a whole batt of color, I was able to add pieces here and there building up the areas of interest the I wanted to focus on. At this point the batt was about three inches thick. I was happy with the design and

decided it was time to actually felt the piece. I covered the front of the batt with another piece of fiber glass screening. Using a needle and heavy duty thread I proceeded to baste the two pieces of screen together with the wool inside. I was sure to use even stitches and cover the entire area of the batt so the wool would not shift too much. Once this was accomplished I tried to felt this piece by hand but because of the large size I wasn't able to accomplish the quality of felt needed. I wanted this felt to be very dense and I knew that by using the washing machine it would be. Therefore I placed the batt in the washing machine using the hottest setting and the shortest wash cycle, with a small amount of liquid soap. After the wash cycle had finished I removed the piece of screen from the washing machine and let it air dry for 2-3 hours. At that time I removed the basting stitches and the fiberglass screening. I was very surprised to see that the wool felted so well it had begun to incorporate with the fiberglass screen. It was a challenge to pull the pieces apart without injuring the piece of wool felt.

My first thought after removing the felted wool from the screen was that I had allowed it to felt too long. The amount of shrink was very high in this piece and I was alarmed at the size reduction. After comparing the final measurements of 20 inches in width by 19 inches in height to the starting measurement of 27 inches in width by 26 inches in height I determined the rate of shrink could be as high as 40%. I had lost a total of 7 inches in width and 7 inches in height. I was pleased that I had an even shrink rate but I was surprised how high it was! The quality of the felt was very good because it had felted very densely. It was so dense in fact that I had lost some of the detail in the color and composition. I was disappointed in the results and contemplated re-doing the piece. Instead I decided to wait and take another look at the piece the next day.

After examining the piece again I decided that felt wasn't a lost cause and in fact the density of the piece would work to my advantage.

This quilt was going to be hung on the wall. If the felt was dense it would not pull as the quilt hung. What I thought was a mistake had worked out well.

One of the things I really like about the piece was the raw unfinished edge that was created during the felting process. The edge was very irregular and added an organic element to the felt. I wanted to utilize this and also add to the element by repeating it elsewhere in the quilt. The idea that I decided on was to create a second piece of felt that could be used as a mat for the first piece, framing it. As a result, the new question was how to create the second piece of felt so it would fit around the first. I needed to calculate how large to make the second piece of felt before felting so that it would fit after the felting had been accomplished. I knew that the felt shrank at a fairly even rate and density. Since I was using the same wool roving as the first piece I was confident that the shrink rate would be consistent.

In order to establish the correct size to begin the mat piece with, I cut a template of paper the same as the starting size of the first piece of felt. I thought that if the rate of shrink was consistent this would be the appropriate place to start laying the wool roving for the mat. This would allow me to simulate felting both pieces at the same time. Since I wanted there to be a space between the first piece of felt and the mat I determined I needed to leave a 3 ½ " space between pieces A and B. (please see illustration two, page 28.) Once I measured a space of 3 ½ " from the paper template I laid the first piece of wool batting for the mat. One of the elements that is very noticeable in this piece are the strong horizontal lines of color in the felt. I wanted piece B to reflect this design to show continuity through out the quilt.

In order to conserve the colors of batting that I wanted to feature in piece B. I used silver gray as the first layer, knowing that it would not be visible. The width of the mat was determined by the width of the batt as it came off of the carder. The second layer of batting was

combination of plum and violet. When I carded these batts I started with a piece of roving that was approximately 18" long. Each batt had ½ of a piece of violet roving and a ½ of a piece of plum roving. This layer was arranged in the opposite direction of the first layer so that felting would occur. The third layer was a combination of navy, light blue, turquoise, plum and violet. When I carded these colors I didn't mix them together but carded them separately. I then separated the batts further by pulling them apart and adding small pieces to the larger batt where I wanted them. Adding pieces by hand allowed me to copy the movement of color in the original piece (Please see piece A, page 28). I found that this process moved very slowly. My next idea was to card batts, combining colors, first using tan, light blue, turquoise and then strands of navy. After carding these batts I pulled them apart even further and added them to the large batt. I then added smaller bits of color to different areas.

Once the batt was set the way I wanted it I placed the second piece of screening on top, making sure the entire area was covered. I used heavy duty thread and an extra large curved needle to sew through the batting and screen. The size of this piece was very large and very awkward to work with. I found the best way to manage piece B was to lay it out on a very large table and walk around it as I sewed. What a very time consuming process this ended up to be! I was very careful to baste this piece in the same manner as the first. I wanted to repeat the results of the first piece as closely as possible.

After basting the roving and screen together I put them in the same wash cycle that I had washed the first piece in, with a small amount of liquid soap. After the piece was felted I removed it from the machine and let it air dry for 2-3 hours. Once it was dry I measured it against the original felt and based on it's size decided that it needed to felt more. I repeated the washing process in the same temperature

water. It was then air dried and this time I was satisfied it had felted enough to shrink to the size I wanted.

Removing the felt from the screening proved to be a challenge. Because it was so densely felted, the piece of felt had started to become incorporated with the screen. I needed to be careful not to pull apart the felt or to rip the shape of the matte. After I removed the screen, both piece A and B were fuzzy, I ironed them with a light steam iron to smooth the surface. Even though the roving used was the same for both pieces, the colors in piece B appeared to be brighter. I think this is due to variations in the wash cycle and felting process. I was very pleased that the quality appeared to be consistent between both pieces of felt. This continuity would make the quilt look more complete.

After examining felt pieces A and B together I decided that I like the outer edge of the felt piece B better than the inner edge. This presented a problem because in order to use the outer edge of the matte I would have to cut it apart. This would undo all of the careful calculations I had made in order to create it. After considerable contemplation I did decide to use the outer edge of the matte, not the inner one.

Now that the components had been created I could begin the process of putting the actual quilt together. I thought the best way to do this would be to start from the center of the piece and work out. This would allow me to be sure I had enough fabric to complete the whole quilt. I also knew that I didn't want any stitching to show on the front of the piece A.

When looking at the quilt you will notice a space between felt pieces A and B where purple habatoi silk is featured. This small hint of silk proved to be a challenge to incorporate in the overall design. I knew I wanted the raw edge to be seen from both felt piece A and B, but how could I attach them to the silk in a manner that would be stable for

hanging? I experimented on a sample piece first, stitching the layers together in a way that it would not be visible. After figuring that this would be a very time consuming method I investigated using Stitch Witchery. This is an iron on fusing agent that allows the artist to secure two layers together using heat and steam. I was pleasantly surprised how well this solved the problem. The piece was fused together very well and was very stable.

After this step was complete I arranged the framing pieces of felt around felt piece A, after measuring from the center to ensure that the piece would stay square. When I did this I wanted to be aware of the subtle nuances in the quilt and that there was a definite horizontal and vertical line in the felt. Because the outer framing piece had been cut apart I could insure that the horizontal and vertical elements matched through out the piece. The frame pieces, or piece B2 were attached to the silk habatoi backing in the same manner as felt piece A - using the Stitch Witchery. This was also used to adhere the felt where there was an overlap, such as the four corners. Again, I was surprised how well this solved the problem. The over lap at the four corners soon became a design element repeated in each of the thesis quilts.

After fusing the pieces of felt that would frame the center element felt piece A. I thought it was necessary to stabilize the entire piece. Since the Stitch Witchery worked so well before I thought I would fuse a large piece of muslin across the back of the silk habatoi. The reasoning behind this idea was I was concerned about the fabric hanging and not being able to support the weight of the completed quilt. This was a good idea but it was done at the wrong time during the construction process. By fusing the muslin on now I wasn't able to work on a flat surface. There was a dip in the back where the frame pieces, piece B2, didn't meet with the center piece. This resulted in a small area where the silk was not pulled flat. There was an area of small ripples. At first I hated the effect and was upset that I hadn't thought

that this would happen. However, now when I look at the piece it adds an element of interest that was done completely by mistake. It was a good lesson learned.

I wanted to include piping in this piece as I had in the Plangi Quilt. This element would carry through the remaining thesis quilts and add a sense of unity within the final display. I decided to first use a row of piping that was covered with the same raw silk that would be used for the sashing and back of the quilt. The second row of piping would be made of silk habatoi, the same color as the silk found between felt pieces A and B. Piping was an easy way to increase the framing effect of this piece. It also overlapped in the corners of the quilt accenting the framed element. I was able to attach the first row of piping using the sewing machine, with no problems. The second row proved to be much more of a challenge. As a result of the bulk between the layer of felt, and the two layers of raw silk I was not able to achieve the results I originally hoped for. This lead me to remove the machine stitching on the second row of piping and put it in by hand, using a needle and thread. This worked much better and I was able to manipulate the fabric in a way that it looked very smooth and finished.

The next step to the felt quilt was attaching the border or sashing to the piping area. This would complete the front of the quilt and I had decided to use the raw silk that was also featured as one of the rows of piping. This fabric would be used on the back as well and would support the weight of the felted area quite easily. The width of each piece was 4 inches plus seam allowance. The difficulty I had experienced in sewing the second row of piping on was repeating itself as I tried to apply the border fabric. It was difficult to stitch over the piping and the fabric had a habit of stretching as it was being sewn into place. I had to remove stitches more than once but eventually I was able to complete a piece that was sewn together properly and was smooth in appearance. After stitching the border in place I trimmed the

fabric found in the seam allowances and I trimmed away the extra felt that was not visible from the front. This cut down on the bulk in the piece and it made it much easier to iron the quilt so it would lay flat. Once the sashing was added to the front of the quilt, it was complete and all that needed to be done was the addition of the quilt batting, the back and binding.

At this time I wanted to measure the size of the quilt batting that I was using in the piece. I continued to use the "Warm and Natural" quilt batting because I was very pleased with the results I had while making the Plangi quilt. To measure the size of the batting, I first laid it on a large table and then laid the quilt face on top of it, the right side of the quilt facing up. The batting was cut to size, adding one inch around the edge of the quilt. This was done to ensure that the batting was large enough in case the piece shifted while I was working on it. After looking at the face of the quilt once the batting had been added I decided to add two more layers of batting under the outside edges where the sashing was located. This was done for two reasons. I was able to hide the rough edge of the felt that was located under the sashing of the quilt and I was able to create a "shadow box " effect that would highlight the felt that was the focus of the piece. This idea worked very well and I was pleased with the effect that it created.

The last challenge of the felt quilt was to put the backing in place. Normally I wouldn't say that this is such a challenging aspect of creating a quilt. It only became a challenge when I realized that there was not enough fabric to cover the back without piecing it together. That was my challenge - how do I piece the fabric so it still looks finished and professional? I was able to solve the problem with some creative maneuvering. The piece of fabric was short by four inches. I was able to replace this four inch piece with another and still have enough fabric to create the invisible casing. It wasn't the best solution but it still looked well put together. At this time I basted the front and

back together with the batting inside. This was done with thread that could be seen easily and would ensure that the contents didn't move or shift when I was doing hand sewing to finish the piece.

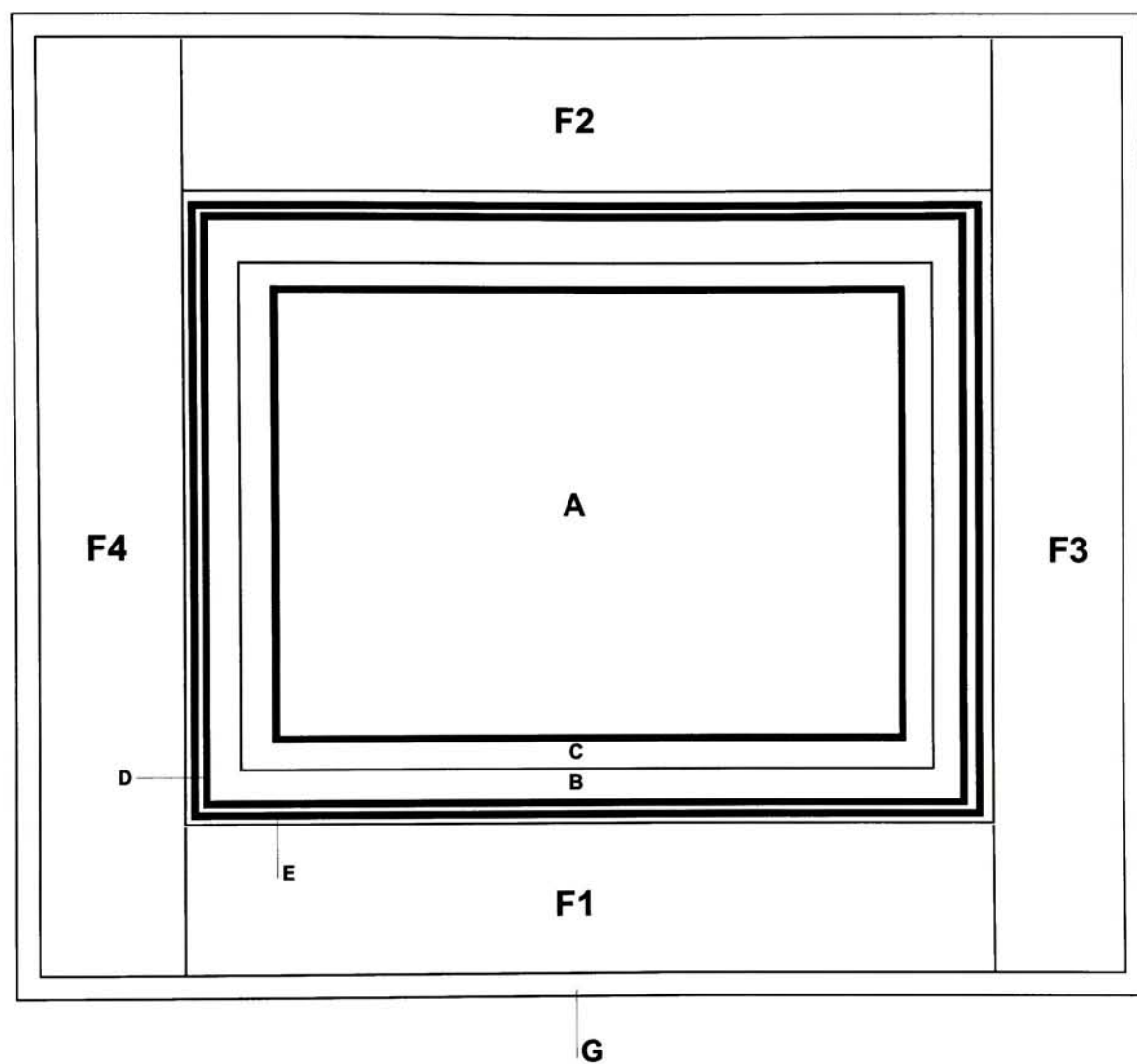
The bias tape that was used to complete the edge of the quilt was made out of the 8mm silk habatoi. I wanted to use this instead of the raw silk because it would pull the components of the quilt together. It was featured in the interior of the quilt and by using it as the binding the viewer would visually pull the piece together. This was done by cutting strips of silk that were three inches wide. I seamed them together into one long piece and pinned it to the right side, or front of the quilt. I thought pinning would be all that I needed to do to keep the silk in place but it moved so much during the sewing that I ended up taking that stitching out, basting it in place in two separate areas and then sewing it on the machine. That final attempt was successful. I removed all of the basting stitches and trimmed the edge of the quilt down to ¼ inch. This would be the width of the binding that was visible from the front of the piece. The raw edge of the silk was folded under, pinned to the back of the quilt and hand stitched in place.

The felt quilt was finished!

By this time I was feeling pretty good about the body of work that was becoming my thesis. I had two major pieces completed and I was very pleased with their appearance and the results that I had achieved. I just hoped the other two would also go as smoothly!

Illustration Two : Felt Quilt

Layout and sewing plan



Quilt Three: Pocket Weave

After creating two quilts that were very different from each other in technique, the challenge became to think of new ways to create quilts in way that they would be a combination of technique and dye process. The plangi quilt was constructed in a very traditional way, being pieced and sewn together. The felt quilt was non traditional in it's focus element - the felt - and also non traditional in how that quilt was created. I wanted to explore a way that the quilt could be woven and quilted at the same time. I also wanted to experiment with how I would dye the fiber used in the quilt and create movement within the piece. This idea was broken down into two questions, 1. How would I weave the fabric? and 2. How would this fabric be dyed?

The question of what weave structure to use became apparent after I spoke to Max about my idea. He was able to recommend that I try weaving a pocket weave structure. This structure is woven on eight harnesses and is arranged so that the fabric creates a pocket that can be stuffed while it is still on the loom. By switching which pockets are being woven at the time (A vs. B) the pocket is woven shut at the same time the next one is being created. I thought this would be an interesting solution to my idea and proceeded to figure the yardage for a sample. A sample was necessary because I had never woven in this way before and I wanted to work with the placement of the pockets and how big they should be. I also wanted to experiment with the color of the warp and this was a good way to accomplish two samples at once. I had decided to use "Annapolis" which is a 100% Egyptian cotton. It

weaves very nicely and because it is a natural fiber I was sure that I could get a vibrant color using hot water dyes.

The dye process that I decided to experiment with, was cone dying. I also wanted to experiment with color. The two previous quilts both contained shades and hues of red, brown and plum. I decided that I wanted to avoid these colors in this piece and expand the palette that was being featured. When I completed the first set of sample colors there was a piece that I did with bronze. I liked that combination and thought it would be an interesting addition to the body of work.

The colors of the Plangi and Felt quilts were very rich and I wanted to continue featuring colors that I had created, not those straight from the packet of powdered dye. With this in mind, I thought bronze was the answer if I could layer it with another color to create rich shade of green.

I decided to experiment in two different ways, I wanted to see what would happen if I took a 1 pound cone and submersed it in a dye bath. Or, what would happen if a series of smaller cones were submersed and taken out on a time schedule. They would each be the same weight but dyed for different amounts of time.

This sample soon became an exercise in trial and error. Cone dying is not a precise way to create color that can be replicated easily. There are many variables to consider, including what fiber was being used, how hot the dye bath was, how much dye was in the dye bath and the length the fiber was submerged. While these variables can be frustrating sometimes they also create an interesting accident that can be used for further pieces.

I decided to dye the sample fibers in two ways. One sample would be dyed on the commercial 1 pound cone. This would be done so that I could see how long it would take an actual cone of Annapolis to dye to the desired shade. I could also see how fast the cone would dry when it was taken from the dye bath and to what degree the dye

would absorb into the fiber. Sample One was placed in a dye bath of water with 3 tablespoons Glauber's salt and one package Cushing's hot water dye. The one pound cone was submerged in the dye bath for 10 hours. During this time the dye bath was kept simmering at a low temperature to maintain the heat of the dye bath. After 10 hours the cone was removed and the excess water was removed. The center of the cone was still very white - no dye had absorbed to that point. What had been absorbed was very interesting to look at and I was pleased with the different intensity of color that was present. It was also interesting to see that the color changed slightly as you looked further into the cone. I decided to submerge the cone for an additional 12 hours to see what would happen with the color. It was submerged into the same dye bath but this time it was not kept simmering as it could not be monitored for that amount of time.

After a total of 22 hours submerged in dye bath this cone was very waterlogged but the color made it to the center of the fibers. The change in color was apparent. The color that was used for this sample was purple. The outside of the cone was very strong purple but as the color faded into the center of the cone it gradually became pink! I thought that was very interesting to see because you could tell what colors had been used to create the powdered purple dye. I removed as much water as possible by squeezing the cone and letting it drip into a sink but it took approximately 1 and ½ weeks for the fiber to dry completely. When I wound the cone off to see the graduation of color The very inside of the cone was a shocking salmon color. I decided that this was a good experiment but I didn't really want a pink quilt. It was time to rethink the color. Bronze was quickly becoming my color of choice.

Sample Two was dyed in the same way as Sample One, just in a smaller quantity. I wound 4 smaller cones of yarn from the original larger cone, each weighed ¼ pound. They were placed in a dye bath

that included one packet of purple dye, 3 tablespoons Glauber's salt and hot water. The first cone was removed after 4 hours of submersion, the second cone was removed after 6 hours, the third cone was removed after 8 hours and the fourth cone was removed after ten hours. The two cones that were removed at 4 and 6 hours were very similar in color and dye intensity. The color did not go all the way through these cones and the center was a pink/white combination. The color in the cones removed after 8 and 10 hours was more satisfactory. This dye experiment also reinforced the idea that purple was not a good choice because of the very distinct pink hue that was present in the center of all the cones.

As a dye example I thought this process was very successful. I was able to judge realistically the amount of time that the process would take, the amount of dye that was needed and how to dry the finished fiber. I was very sure of my color choice after this experimentation and I was eager to start the next step of the process. While the dyed fiber was drying it was time to figure the ends per inch for the pocket weave and the sett of the warp. First however I wanted to wind the warp.

Normally when I wound a warp I would start with two cones of fiber to speed the process up. When winding this warp I was able to do that but the chains needed to be wound in a very specific order. I wanted to see if I could wind the warp so that the warp color would travel from light to dark and then light again. Since the fiber on the cone was wound from dark to light I could wind one warp chain using two cones of fiber. Once the chains were wound they were placed on the leash sticks with the dark fibers together. This meant turning one warp chain upside down. At first I was concerned that this would change the porey cross but there was no problem when I dressed the loom. It was interesting to figure out the way I wanted the warp to be wound and how by making a variation, I could change the whole look of the woven

piece. I felt free to try new things with the warp because this was my sample and there was no wrong way to do it - mistakes would be OK. An additional idea was to create a repeat or stripped effect by winding one cone at a time as a warp chain so the warp would repeat itself dark to light, dark to light. I tried both in this sample.

The width of this sample was 14 inches, set at 24 ends per inch. The total woven length would be one and a half yards long. With loom allowance that made the warp two yards long. I wanted to be very aware of what my starting warp length was so that I could account for take up when I wove the final piece. Pocket weave is threaded in a block pattern to ensure the structure of the weave. I wanted to weave the sample with different width blocks to experiment and see if I could create a sense of movement in the piece. There were a total of 7 blocks in this sample.

The weft fiber was also a concern while I was weaving because I did not want the warp to be overpowered by the weft. I had spent a lot of time on the dye process and I wanted the warp to be the main focus of the piece. I decided to experiment in this fashion also, but I ultimately settled on a 20/2 cotton that was very close to the warp color. The weft was so small it required numerous picks per inch but the quality of the fabric was therefore very high and the warp was the main focus. The next area to experiment with was the fiber that would go into the pockets. I wanted to continue with the theme of natural fibers and try both fiber fill that was 100% cotton and cutting squares of quilt batting the size of the pocket to be stuffed.

The pocket weave sample was successful and I felt comfortable at this point moving on to dying the fiber for the actual quilt. I needed to dye 4 cones of "Annapolis" to ensure that I had enough fiber for the woven aspect of this piece. Each cone would be submerged in it's own dye pot that contained 3 tablespoons Glubber's salt, one package of Cushing's hot water dye in Bronze and hot water. After each cone dyed

for eight hours in the dye bath the outside of the cone is a really nice shade of walnut brown but the center is still white. The cones were placed back into the dye bath and were allowed to sit for a total of 4 days. The color would not permeate far enough into the cone to dye the center most fibers. This became very frustrating. I consulted with Max and he gave me a number of suggestions. First I should increase the strength of the dye bath to two packets dye per pot. Then I should increase the heat in the dye bath and heat the fiber longer. This would cause the dye to be more easily absorbed into the fiber. Taking these two suggestions, I increased the strength of the dye bath and let the bath simmer for twelve hours, watching carefully and adding more water when needed. The cones sat for seventy two hours and were then simmered for twelve more. After removing the cones from this dye bath I discovered the dye had absorbed better but I thought the center of the cone was still too light.

The cones were removed from the dye bath after a total of 240 hours or 10 days. I was curious if it would also take that long for them to dry! The answer to this dilemma was to place the cones in the box used for drying silk screens. With the fan on the cones dried in a matter of 2 days. I was amazed! I wound the cones into the proper warp chains, based on the sample I had woven, fastened the porey cross well and rinsed the fibers in hot water. I wanted to make sure all of the excess salt and dye were removed from the warp before I started to weave. The chains were hung to dry and when they had I was ready to dress the loom.

The loom was dressed the same as the sample, 24 ends per inch, two threads per dent. The green color was nicely distributed throughout the warp. Starting very deep, dark green in the middle and moving to a lighter green/bronze color. After dressing the loom with the "Annapolis" thread I was very pleased with the results but I decided that the warp needed something to make it "snap" - some added interest

that could be achieved by laying in silk threads. In every other dent across the width of the piece I added 5-7 silk threads. They ranged in color from brown, green tan and gold. This was a little challenging because I was laying thread in where there was all ready a warp yarn. It was difficult pulling all of the threads through the hettles on the loom because there was 6-8 threads going through each one.

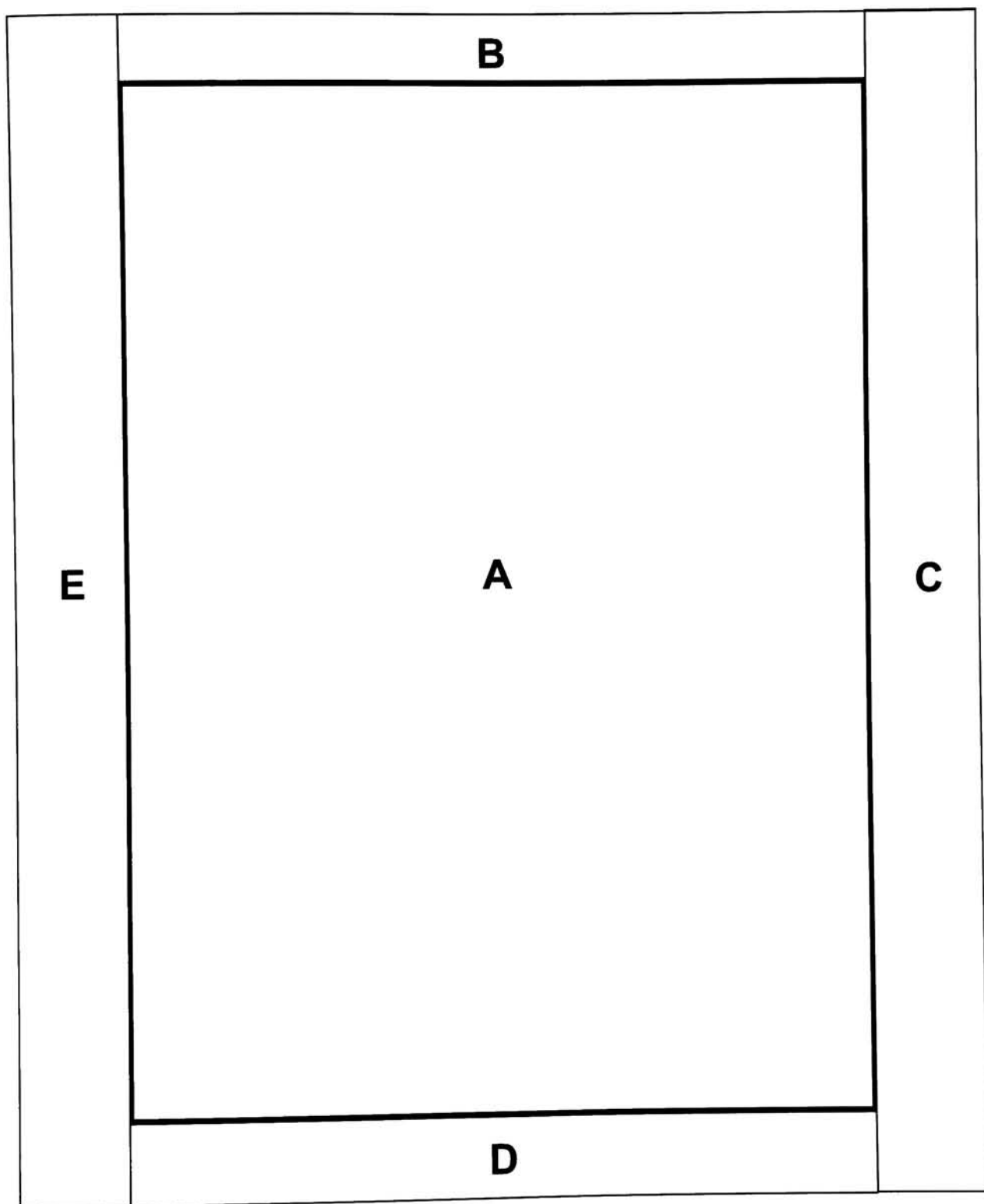
I decided against dying my own fiber for use as the weft. The focus of this piece was on the warp so I didn't want to spend the time dying and drying the other fibers. Not to mention taking them from skein form into a ball of yarn that would be usable. The weft that I used was a 20/2 cotton in Olive green combined with a single strand of metallic gold thread. After weaving 6 inches of the pocket weave I decided not to continue with this weave structure because so much detail of the warp was being lost to the weave structure. This included the warp I labored over dying and the silk threads that were laid into the piece. I removed the weft in the 6 inches woven and experimented with plain weave to see what the result would be. I was much more pleased with this and decided to continue weaving Plain Weave through out the remainder of the piece. I wanted the focus point to remain the warp and not whether the piece had batting woven inside of it.

The fabric for the piece had been dyed while the loom was being dressed and the original fabric woven. I continued to use both raw silk noile and 8mm silk habatoi fabric. To dye the yardage needed, I used the piece dyer that was located in dye room at RIT. This enables an artist to dye a long piece of yardage without streaking or miss coloration of the fabric. The fabric was dyed first with a combination of bronze and silver gray green. The resulting color was an incredible shade of chartreuse that didn't match the existing colors for the piece. I then over dyed the fabric using Reseda Green and was very happy with the results.

As a result of not weaving this piece in a pocket weave structure it was very simple to put the rest of the quilt together. Since this piece would also be hanging on the wall I felt it was important to stabilize the woven fabric so that when it was hung it didn't pull out of shape. To do this I laid the woven piece - green piece A. (see illustration three, page 37.) on a piece of muslin and pinned the two together. Using the sewing machine I stitched three vertical and three horizontal lines through the fabric and the muslin, equal space apart. This was done using matching thread and is nearly impossible to see on the finished piece. Once that step was finished I created piping using the silk habatoi that had been dyed a matching shade. This piping was placed between the green piece A and the sashing pieces B,C,D and E. (see illustration three, page 37.) The piping and the four inch sashing pieces were the same as in the completed quilts and lent a sense of unity to the final presentation. After attaching the piping and sashing to the woven element of the quilt it was time to add the batting and backing. The batting I used was the same 100% cotton batting that was used in the other two quilts. To measure the correct size I laid a double thickness of batting on a flat surface and laid the completed quilt face on top of it. I trimmed the batting to fit the quilt and then laid these pieces on the fabric that had been prepared for use as the back. This was done by adding an invisible casing like the ones that were on the other quilts. Once these pieces were lined up and basted together I added the seam binding around the edge to finish the quilt. The seam binding was made of the same raw silk that was used for the sashing and back of the quilt. The raw edge of the seam binding was pressed under and folded to the back of the quilt where it was hand stitched in place. Quilt number three was completed! Only one more to finish.

Illustration Three: Pocket Weave

Layout and Sewing plans



Quilt Four: Computer Weaving

From the first time I tried weaving on the computer aided loom that was available in the textiles studio, I was enthralled with the freedom and increased ability it gave me. I could create my own designs and weave at much higher skill level than before. I was also able to weave much faster than on a manual loom - making it possible to create long lengths of fabric. I loved to dress the loom once and have enough warp to weave 10 yards of fabric in a week.

I was starting to get down to the wire when it came to the production of the fourth quilt. If I was very careful of my time and scheduled myself well I would be able to finish and double check all four quilts before installing them in the gallery. I didn't want to be the artist who was late in installation or had to eliminate a piece due to time constraints. After thinking about that and what other techniques I wanted to highlight in my body of work I decided that computer weaving was the way to go with this piece and the warp fibers would be dyed using the Ikat technique.

Ikat is a technique for dyeing warp fibers that originated in Japan and is very traditional. The warp fibers would be wound into chains that were the correct length, in this case 5 yards. Each chain would contain one inch of the warp which was 60 threads of 20/2 white cotton. The chains were secured so that tangling would be kept at a minimum when submersed in the first dye bath, the color used first in this piece was Scarlet. Once the chains were allowed to dry, a pre-determined amount of the base color Scarlet was bound tightly with Ikat tape - one yard. This tape is two inches wide and comes on a roll, and is made of

plastic - very similar to shopping bags found at a grocery store. This tape is very useful because it enables the artist to bind off as large or small of an area as needed. The tightly bound plastic prohibits the next dye bath color from seeping into the entire chain, thus keeping part of the chain the original color - scarlet. One of the aspects I like about Ikat is there is a slight blending of color where the bound area and unbound area meet. This is very subtle and I planned to use that to my advantage. Once the first area was bound off the warp chains were submersed in a second dye bath - Magenta. After the dye bath was complete the warp chains were allowed to dry again and the second area of color was bound with the Ikat tape. Each bound area measured one yard. One thing to remember when discussing Ikat is that each chain should be bound separately. It is a time consuming process but the end results are worth it. The third dye bath was tan, and after the warp chains were dried, the next one yard measure was bound. The last dye bath, number four was Seal Brown, over dyed with Egyptian Red.

After the dye baths were complete the chains were allowed to dry one last time and then they were unwrapped. It was important to remember while unwrapping the chains that scissors were not a tool you wanted too close to the fiber. These fibers were very easy to break and one slip could mean that a whole chain was cut. It proved the easiest to cut the knots from the chains where the Ikat tape had been tied and then unwrap the plastic by hand. I was very pleased with the end results of the dying.

Now that the warp chains were ready to be placed on the loom it was important to line up the chains on the lease sticks according to the knot that was placed four inches from the end of the chain. This knot was placed as a marker, each time an area was measured to be bound off with Ikat tape it was measured from this point. That would ensure that once the loom was dressed the gradation in color would be the

same across the woven piece of cloth. The loom was dressed and double checked for any threading or computer errors. Once those problems were taken care of I was able to weave four yards of the Ikat fabric. I used a commercially dyed 20/2 cotton for the weft.

While I was weaving the Ikat fabric I was also dying the raw silk noile and 8mm silk habatoi for the piping, sashing and backing of the quilt. I used the piece dyer to dye these fabrics also and this ensured that both fabrics would be the same color. Too bad the color was completely wrong! In the first dye bath I used Cushing's hot water dye in Scarlet and added Magenta while the piece was still dying to deepen the color. This produced a beautiful color but not one that matched the warp threads. I decided to dye the fabric again and this time I tried a combination of tan and seal brown. That produced a really strange purple/puce color. In my last ditch effort to salvage this fabric Max suggested overdyeing the fabric with a combination of Cherry and Cardinal. That did the trick and the resulting color was a beautiful mix of magenta and red, it matched the warp perfectly. After the fabric was washed and dried it was ready to use.

While the commercial fabric was being dyed for the quilt I was able to complete weaving on the computer aided loom. This fabric was a breeze to weave because the loom enabled me to treadle faster and throw a shuttle quicker. This was a result of the computer keeping track of everything instead of the person weaving. Once the fabric was woven and cut from the loom I used a Serger to serge both ends of the fabric to make sure that it would not unravel while it was being handled. I handwashed the fabric and hung it to dry. When it was hanging in the studio I was able to take a step back and truly admire the variation in colors and the subtle nature of the Ikat.

Now that my fabric was woven I needed to determine where in the fabric the thirty 6 inch x 6 inch squares should be cut. I wanted to highlight areas of the fabric where a color change was visible or where

there was a slight nuance in the color of the fabric. To do this, I cut 10 paper “picture frames” that would frame a 6x6 inch square. This allowed me to isolate a chosen area. I laid a total of 10 squares out at a time, being sure to have 8 squares of each color. Some of these squares showed the transition of one color to the next. After these squares were cut from the Ikat cloth. I stabilized the hand-woven fabric by cutting a square the same size of muslin and serging the two pieces together. This kept the edges of the fabric from fraying and also made the fabric more stable. I thought this was important since the quilt would be a hanging wall piece. The muslin would keep the Ikat fabric from stretching.

I wanted this quilt to have a strong visual impact that was a result of the arrangement of color. In order to do this it was important to arrange the pieces in a way that showed movement within a unified composition. The easiest way to do this was to arrange the pieces on a large countertop. I would stand on a chair to view them at a distance and rearrange the pieces if I thought it was necessary. Once I decided where I thought the pieces should go they were all labeled on the back with a number. This was to ensure that the pieces were put together in the proper order.

At this point of the process I wanted to introduce the silk habatoui piping that was the common element throughout the thesis quilts. I decided that I would put piping between each of the squares of fabric. This would add the continuity I was looking for and also accentuate the grid like structure of this piece.

To sew the squares together I took the pieces found in the top row of the quilt and laid them out in the proper order. I worked from left to right and sewed piece one to piece two with piping in between. I then sewed piece two to piece three with piping in the middle. This method continued until I had sewn all of the pieces together in the top row. At that time I laid out the pieces from the second row and sewed them

together in the same fashion. This continued until I had sewn together all of the squares into six rows of five each, with piping in between each of the squares. I laid the six rows on the table in order. The next step was to sew the rows together with piping in between them, making sure that the piping that ran vertically would match the entire length of the quilt. This would mean that careful pinning and sewing was needed. To sew the rows together horizontally I started with row one and row two. I placed the piping against the right side of row one and pinned it down across the length of the row, making sure I was pinning on the bottom of the squares since that would be the side connected to row two. I then pinned the top of row two to the bottom of row one, making sure that the vertical piping lines matched as I worked from one side to the other. (see illustration four, page 44)

Once the two rows were pinned together I used the sewing machine to sew them in place. I had to be very careful when doing this, making sure the fabric did not shift as I was sewing. After completing this row I went on to sew the remaining rows together in order. This was complete when all of the rows were together and formed the face of the quilt. I checked to make sure the rows of piping were straight and matched as closely as they could. I was very pleased to see that I didn't have to remove any stitching because the rows were very straight and matched very well!

The two remaining steps to finishing the face of the quilt were adding the piping around the woven area and the sashing that would create the fabric border. Since I had covered enough piping with the silk habatoi these two steps could be completed at the same time. I wanted to place the sashing on the top and bottom of the quilt face first. This would show the continuity throughout the pieces also.

The piping and sashing were attached to the quilt face in the same way the individual squares had been attached to each other. I first pinned the piping to the quilt face so it would not move and then

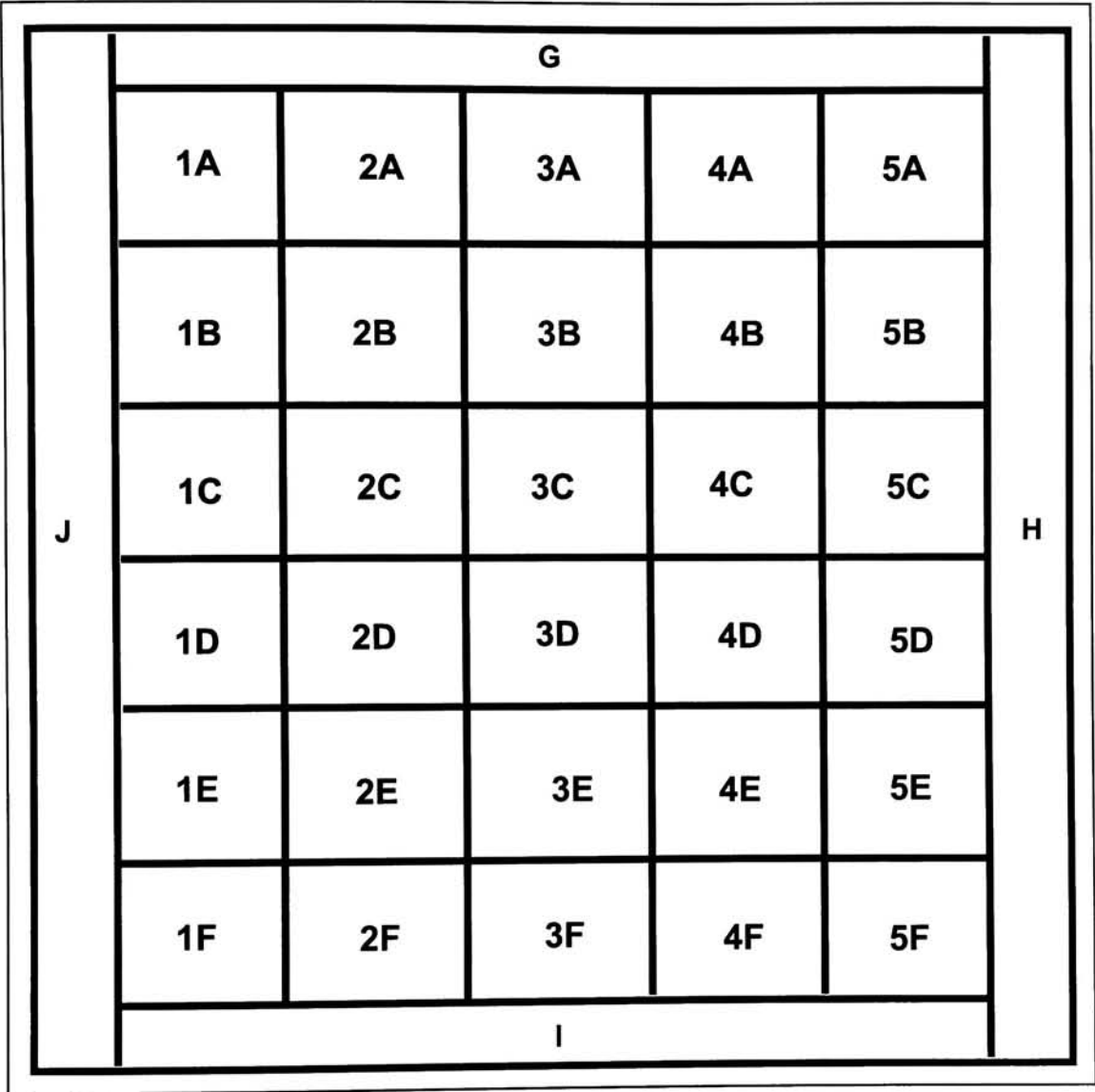
pinned the sashing fabric on top of it. I again used the sewing machine to sew the pieces together, going very slowly so the fabric would not shift and move the piping as I went along. After I had sewn the top and bottom pieces onto the quilt it was time to place the two sides pieces of sashing on. This was done in the same manner. (see illustration four, page 44.)

The quilt batting and backing were applied to this quilt in the same way it had been applied to the other three quilts. I laid the quilt face on a piece of "Warm and Natural" batting that was two layers thick. I then cut around the edges and made sure the quilt batting was laying flat. At this time I decided to add an additional layer of quilt batting along the border of the piece to give the sashing a little more depth. After this was finished I laid the pieces of batting and the quilt top on the backing fabric that had all ready been prepared with an invisible casing. The three layers were basted together so that they would not move as I sewed the binding around the edges. I used the raw silk noil fabric for the binding on this quilt. When the binding had been stitched on to the edge I flipped the quilt over so I was looking at the back and folded the quilt binding over the raw edge of the fabric. This was then pinned into place and handsewn onto the back of the quilt.

The Red Quilt was complete! I even had time to spare, all though 24 hours isn't much.

Illustration Four: Computer Weaving

Layout and Sewing Plan



The Installation

Now that the quilts were finished I needed to think of a way to hang them so that they could be viewed during my thesis show. I knew that I wanted them to be hung in a way that was intimate and forced the viewer to get close to them. Even though these quilts were not meant to be used as coverlets I wanted the viewer to be close to them as they looked at the subtle qualities in color and texture. A traditional quilt would be viewed this way.

To solve this problem I decided to hang my quilts in a “room”. This was possible by constructing a room of panels that were used in the Bevier Gallery. I could have these arranged to my specifications and measurements. This ended up working very well because the pieces were close to one another and were not lost in the size and space of the gallery. The intimate qualities that I wanted to represent were still there. (see illustration five, page 47) I decided that the quilts could also be hung in order if they were displayed this way. I wanted the viewer to appreciate the series in the order that they were created because I thought this was an important element in the creation of the whole body of work. Also the visual statement was better displayed if the quilts were hung in order. The first and third quilt are the two largest while the second and fourth quilt are very similar in size. For the installation to have visual harmony I wanted the pieces to be staggered in size. This meant they would be displayed large, small, large, small. (see illustration five, page 47)

The solution for hanging the quilts was one that was very easy to create and install. This was an aspect that was very important to me. I wanted these quilts to be able to be hung by anyone who could read directions. This would make it easier for me to send them to shows and

cut the cost of freight because they would not require a heavy stand or armature. I needed something to slide through the invisible casing that was made into the backing of each quilt. This had to be very lightweight and easy to handle, it also needed to be something that could be painted and have screws installed into the ends so that a nail could be driven through. I decided on ¼ inch wooden slats that I had cut to length for each piece. Once the pieces were cut I sanded the edges smooth and checked for any rough areas.

The pieces of wood were then spray painted to match the quilt they would be supporting. This was done for two reasons, first so that the wood matched the quilt and second, if a person was installing these pieces without assistance they could figure out the purple slat matched the purple quilt, so on and so forth.

After the pieces of wood were painted and allowed to dry I attached small, ¼ inch eye hooks into each end of the piece of wood. (see illustration six, page 47) this was where the nails would be driven through the eye hook and into the wall. If the nail was a larger size the piece could be permanently secured or if the nail was smaller it would allow the piece to be removed easily.

I was very pleased with the method of installation that I had chosen. Working by myself with the proper tools I was able to hang the four quilts in 1 ½ hours. This included any changes to make sure they were level and square. I had met another goal in the creation of my thesis work.

Illustration Five : Installation Diagram

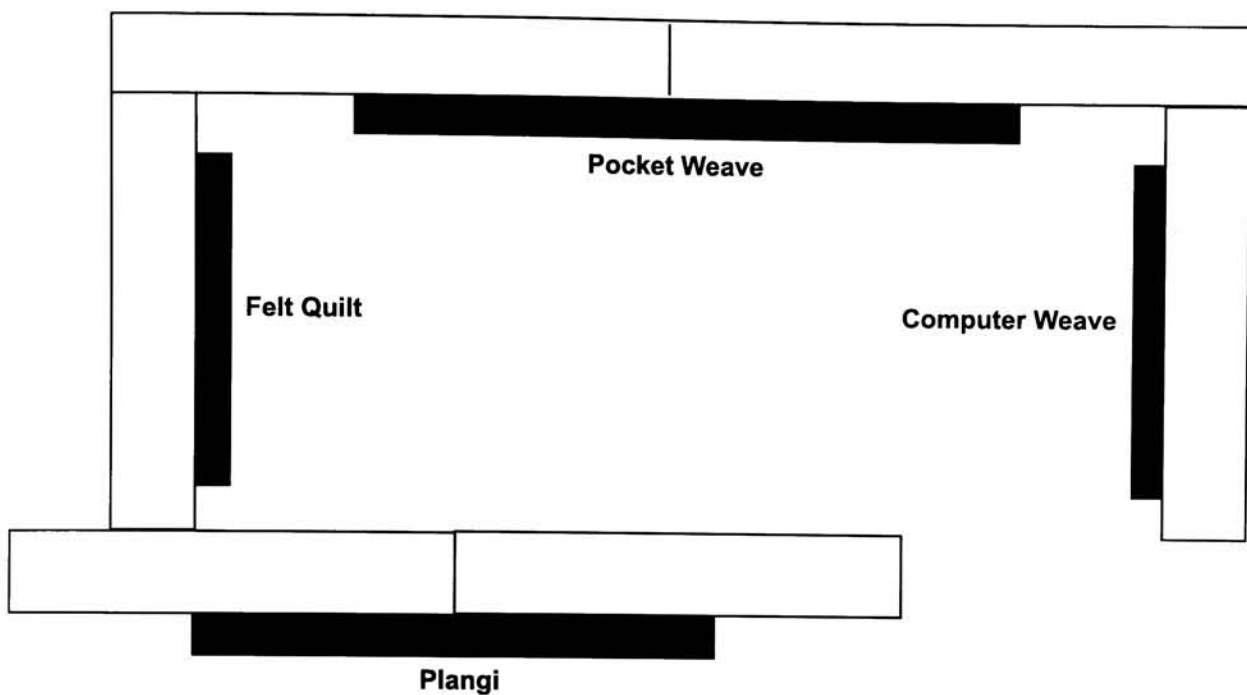


Illustration Six : Hanging Diagram



Response from the Viewer

As soon as the pieces were installed in the gallery they began to generate response from both faculty and students. These were people who knew me and my work, the process I used to generate the quilts and how long they had taken to create. What really surprised me was there were also people I had never met before and who had never seen any of my work, or had any clue what went on in a textile studio. I was thrilled that people actually “got it”. After reading my artist’s statement they understood what I was trying to convey to the viewer. Most satisfying of all was the fact that I had created a recognizable piece of art. I had overcome the struggle I was having, whether or not my chosen medium could be displayed as art or if it was only functional. The long months of work, frustration and occasionally tear filled moments had come to a culmination that I was a “real” artist. This was the most satisfying feeling I had through out my college career. I could say now that I was an Artist! I had proof! What I didn’t count on was the amazing experience of the night my thesis show opened. My family and friends came to see my work and the two hours of that opening flew by as if they were only minutes. If every person could experience what that feeling was like there would so many more artists in the world.

One thing that did surprise me once the quilts were hung was that everyone who saw them had their own favorite. It was different depending on who the person was but what one person saw in the Plangi quilt another person who found that same quality in the Pocket Weave quilt or in the Felt quilt. Everyone saw something different. I found it very amusing when people were determined that I had done something “on purpose” and they saw what that was, when in fact I had

no idea what they were talking about! It was a good opportunity to smile, nod and absorb everything that was said.

Many of the comments that people had was concerning the colors of the pieces and the grid motif that repeated itself through out the installation. I was asked if the 1970's played a role in influencing my work. This confused me at first but then the person clarified their comment. They thought the colors were straight from the 70's, not to mention that was an era when fiber art was so popular. This was another time when I smiled, nodded and said thank you.

One comment I found really interesting was one about the grid structure in the pieces. This viewer said they felt as if they were looking through a window pane at a landscape or something very far off into the distance. The Felt quilt was a favorite of theirs because they felt as if they were looking over mountains and hills in the morning mist. They also enjoyed the Red quilt because of the picture framing quality of the silk habatoi piping. I had tried very hard not to make my work "look" like something but if only by instinct, people tried very hard to do that. I thought that was very interesting and I enjoyed their attempts. Some of the things people had thought of never occurred to me. It was one of the best parts of the thesis experience to hear their comments.

Others tried to relate my work to other artists and deduct where I may have gotten my inspiration and ideas from. I appreciated their effort but I can truly say that these ideas and designs were mine. I have had very little training in art history and while I enjoy it I am not very good at dropping names. I don't have the ability to remember that a certain technique is common to a certain artist and they are known for it. This is an area I am trying to change at the moment. It was suggested that my quilts looked as if they had been influenced or inspired by Piet Mondrian or Richard Diebenkorn. I quickly looked these artists up in the library after that suggestion, I can appreciate the comparison and I do see the similarities but there was no prior

knowledge of these artists. I can safely say they were not a direct influence. I have a tendency in my work towards very structured, grid like quilt designs. That is what makes sense to me artistically. This is also something I want to look at working away from in the future.

Final Comments

When I started writing this section I first thought it should be titled "Conclusion", now I disagree. My thesis work may have ended but I feel as though a whole new area has been opened to me. This isn't the end or conclusion of the process, I feel that I am just beginning! The research that I have done for the thesis work has influenced me to develop ideas that will take years to complete. I have been very careful in writing them down and keeping track of my thoughts because somewhere down the line I am sure they will be interesting to work with. If nothing else they will be worth a good laugh!

My own feelings about the scope of this thesis and the work I was able to create is very positive. I set out with a goal, one that seemed huge at the time, and I was able to finish it. What is most remarkable to me is that every time I look at the quilts I remember step by step the process and challenges I had. These pieces were my life for seven months and I feel a strong connection to them. I have been asked if I would sell them if the opportunity arose. I'm not sure what my response would be, how do you put a price on seven months? With some convincing they would be available, but not anytime soon.

This thesis has opened many doors for me in the world of quilting. I have found that a very traditional technique can be interesting and fun. Most of all it can be very versatile when manipulated in different ways and by using different fabrics.

There are two projects that I have recently completed that were directly influenced by my thesis work . The first was a friendship quilt that I made in collaboration with two former classmates of the Weaving and Textile Department at RIT, Jennie Fox and Jennifer Athanas. This quilt was made as a going away present for another former classmate, Kimberly Kilc (now Dipetro) and her husband Tony.

In the tradition of pioneer women we made individual squares that represented things about our mutual friendships. The three artists were given the same amount of ten printed fabrics with the instructions to complete ten squares each. These ten squares were done in a crazy quilt style and each measured 16 inches x 16 inches. Once we completed our ten squares, Jennifer, Jennie and myself met on a Tuesday night at 6 p.m., at 11:30 p.m. we had a completed quilt! The quilt was put together very systematically, working from one end of the row to another and then stitching the rows together one at a time. Things move very quickly when you have three people sewing at once. Kimberly and Tony must have really loved the quilt because they moved back to Rochester in the end, we were glad to have them back!

Another project that was inspired by the thesis quilts was a jumper that I made in a true patch work style. The fabric was pieces that I had left from making dresses to wear to class. I decided on a commercial pattern that I liked and then I pieced together fabric, measuring against the pattern piece as I went. After I had completed piecing together the larger pattern pieces I sewed the dress together, added button holes and buttons. It was then ready to wear. I was fortunate to have enough of four fabrics that went very well together to complete this project. I have worn it many times and it is a conversation piece.

Now that I have a small body of work I have been able to enter these pieces in different shows around the area. The Stained Glass Quilt has been displayed at the Wayne County Council of the Arts and

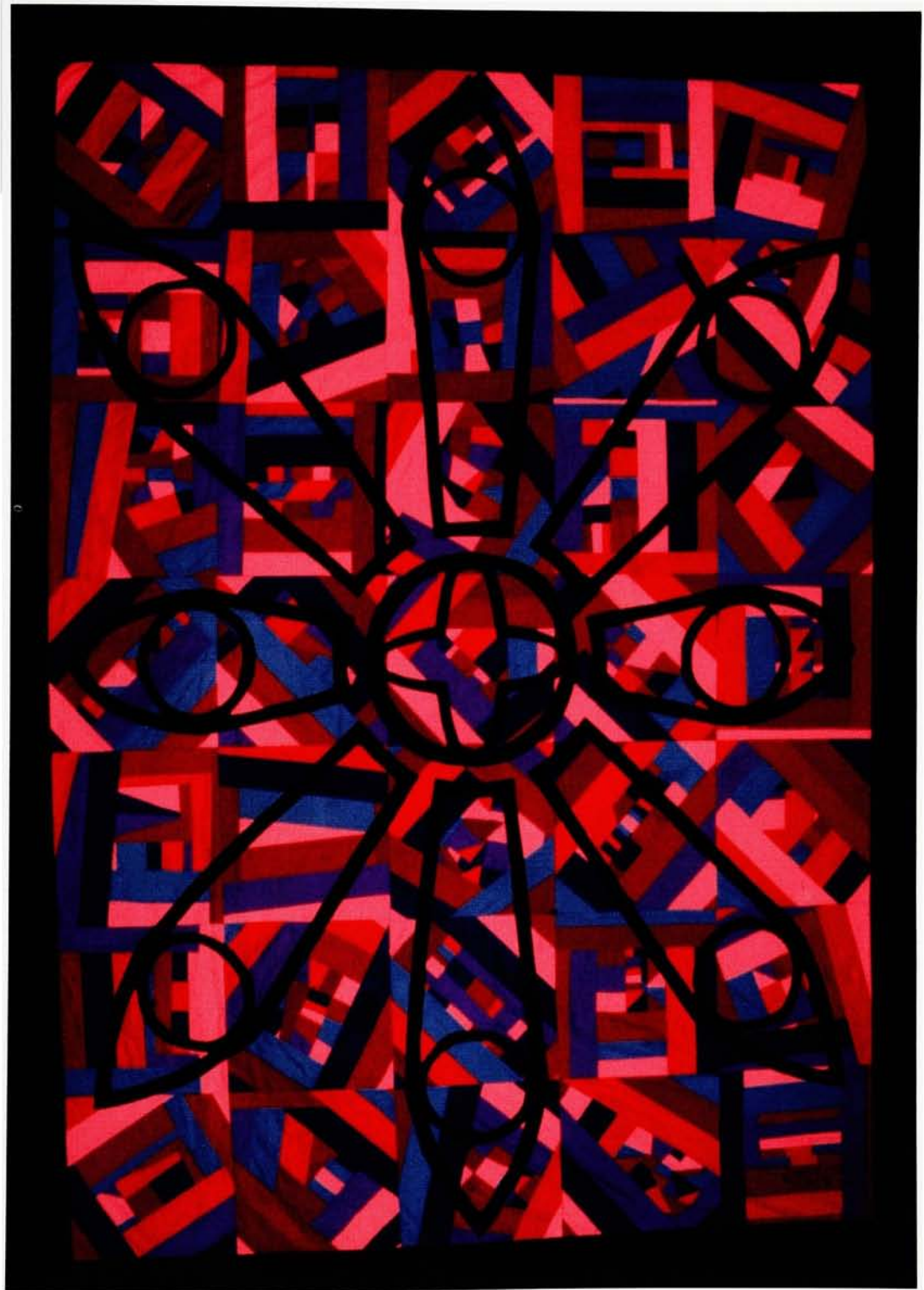
at the Korean Consulate in New York City. Future plans include exhibiting the Thesis Quilts and others I may create in the future. I would also like to have a large body of work and the ability to have a piece continually on display in some capacity.

Future quilts and projects are something that has been very important to me now that the Thesis Quilts are finished. I have enjoyed the creative process of these quilts so much I don't want to lose the momentum that I have created for myself. I would like to look into more traditional patterns for quilts while also adding my own unique twist to what I create. I would also like to invest the time and effort into dying my own fabric for quilting. Not to mention what financial opportunities might lie ahead.

I'd better get started!!

Stained Glass Quilt

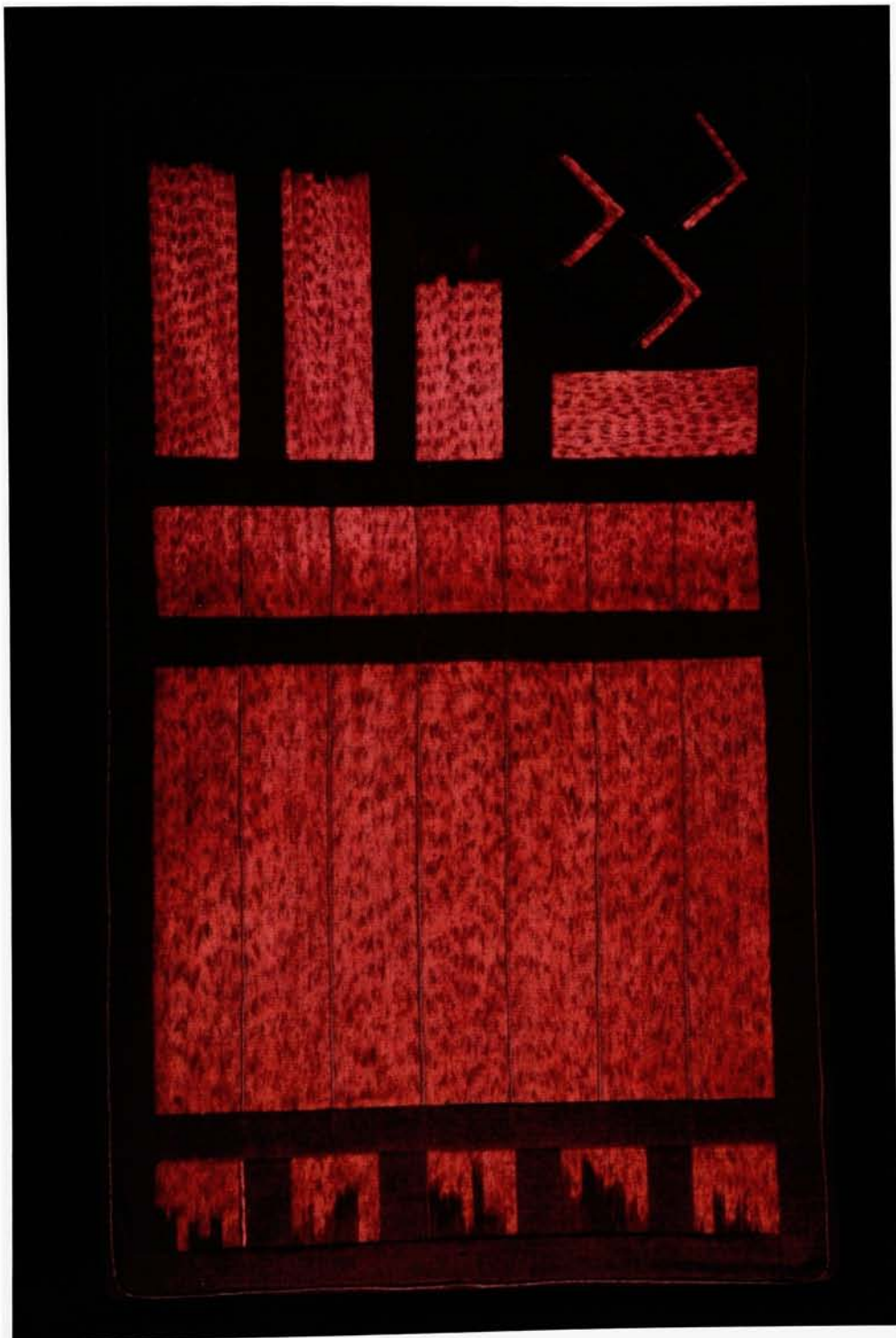
77 inches x 90 inches
100 % Cotton fabric and batting



Quilt One: Plangi

36 inches x 54 inches

Cotton Fiber, Silk Noile and Silk Habatoi



Weaving the Plangi Fabric

100% cotton fiber, hand dyed by the artist



Carding the wool to create felt

Wool Roving was hand dyed by the artist and carded into
batts for the second quilt

100% Wool roving and Cushing's hot water dyes



Mixing color and designing the felt batt

Wool roving was carded and arranged to form the inner and outer image and felted in the washing machine

100% Wool roving and Cushing's hot water dyes



The Felt Quilt

100% Wool Roving, Silk Habatou, Silk Noile
Hand dyed by the artist
36 x 36 inches



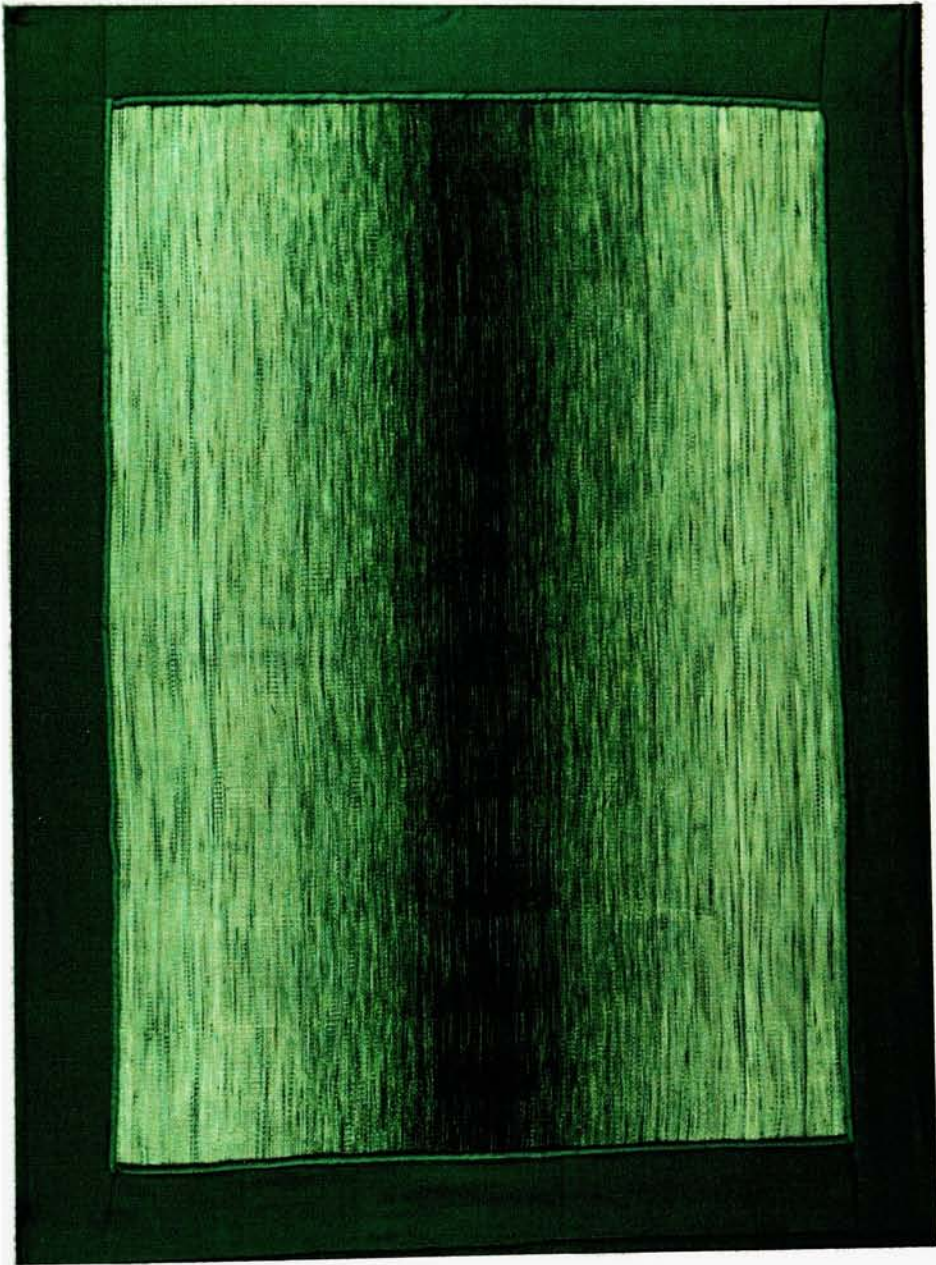
Dressing the loom for Pocket Weave

100% Cotton fiber, hand dyed by the artist
100% silk fiber



The Green Quilt

100% Egyptian Cotton, Silk Noile and Silk Habatoi
Hand dyed by the Artist
42 inches X 54 inches



Weaving the fabric for Quilt Four

100% Cotton fibers, hand dyed by the artist



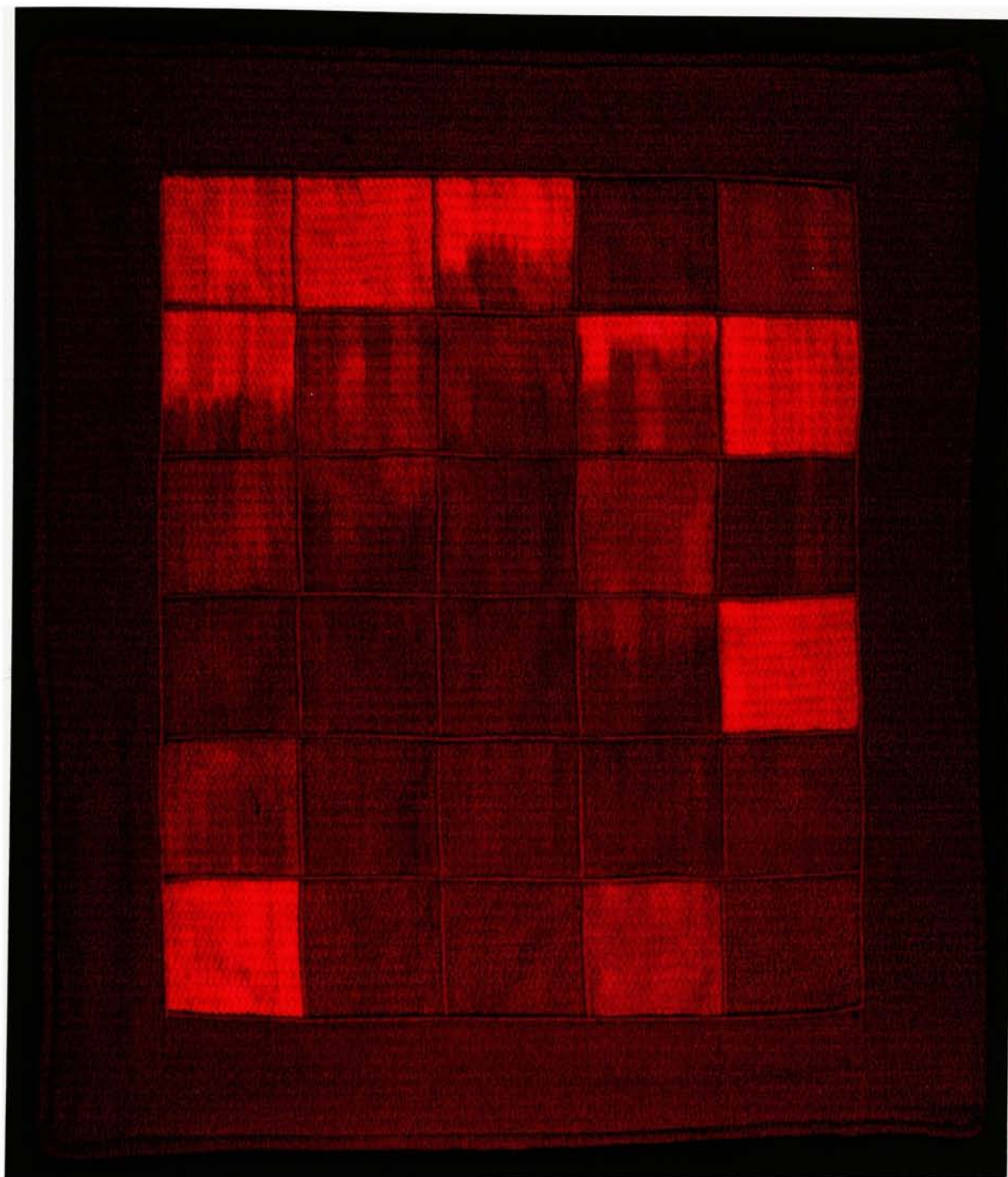
The Ikat fabric for Quilt Four

100% Cotton, handwoven by the artist



Quilt Four - Computer Weaving

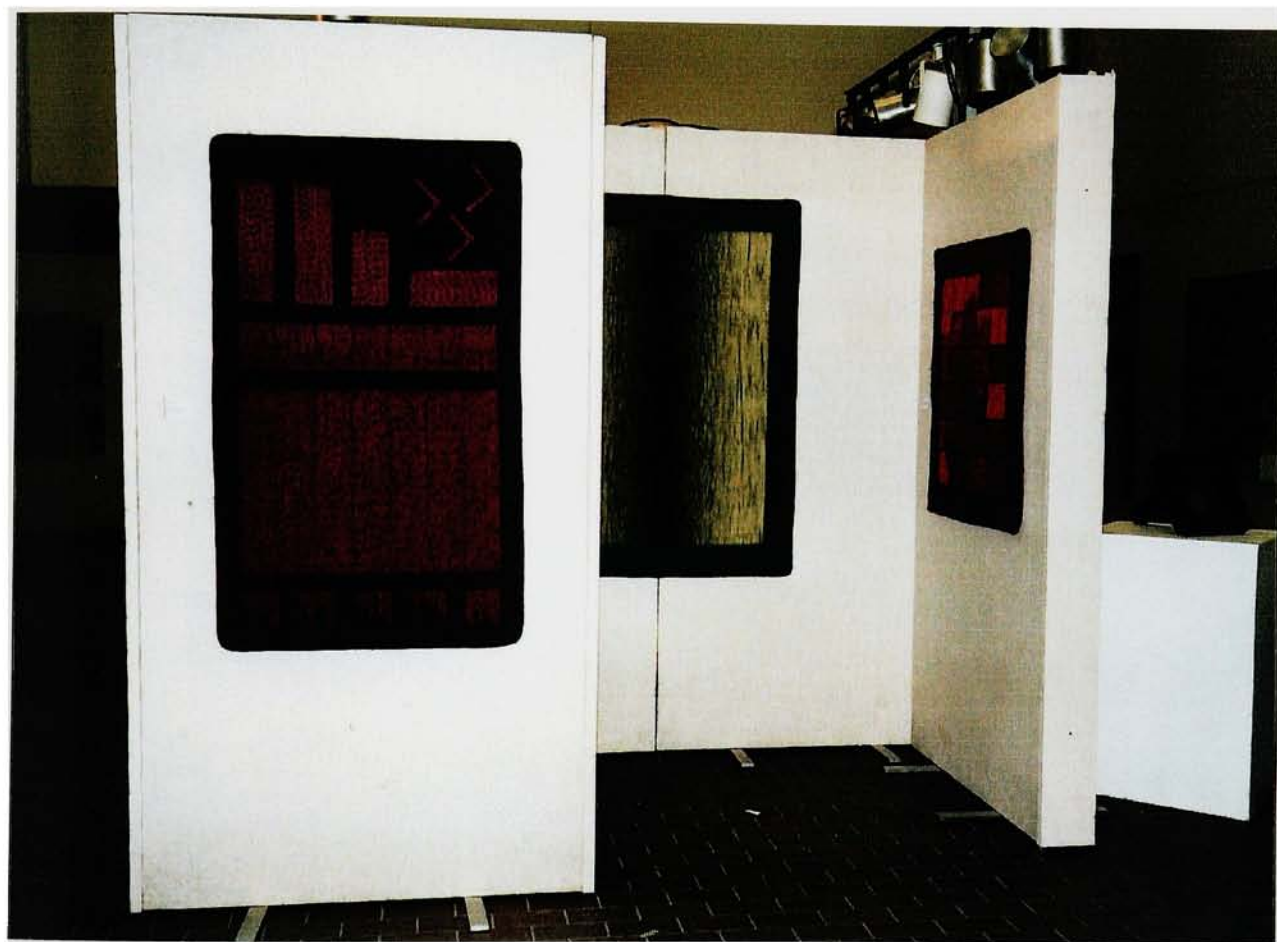
100% Cotton Fibers, Silk Noile and Silk Habatoi
36 inches x 40 inches



Master of Fine Arts - Thesis Installation

Bevier Gallery - Rochester Institute of Technology

April 1998



The Friendship Quilt

100% Cotton Quilt Fabric
72 inches x 96 inches

